



# BULLETIN

Official Publication of the State Bar of New Mexico

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## NOTICES

### N.M. SUPREME COURT Disciplinary Board

In the Matter of CAMILLE CORDOVA,  
Esq., an Attorney Licensed to Practice  
Before the Courts of the State of New  
Mexico.

#### Disciplinary No. 12-95-292 FORMAL REPRIMAND

This matter arose out of your misconduct in two unrelated cases, and your inaction in the disciplinary process. A *Specification of Charges* was filed against you on December 21, 1995. These charges were amended in May of 1996. You ultimately entered into a conditional agreement not to contest and consent to discipline pursuant to NMRA 1998, Rule 17-211, which was ultimately approved by the Supreme Court. The consent agreement called for your suspension from the practice of law for six months. This suspension was deferred, however, pending your completion of a one year supervised probation. You have served your one year probation and are now being issued this formal reprimand in lieu of the six month suspension.

The *Amended Specification of Charges* contained allegations regarding your representation of Kathy Araki in her divorce case. Ms. Araki alleged that you delayed approximately six months in obtaining an appointment with the Court Clinic. Ms. Araki also complained that you misrepresented the reasons for the delay in her case. You represented to

Ms. Araki that the delay in obtaining the Court Clinic appointment was due to a clinic backlog, when in fact the request for Court Clinic appointment had not been timely filed.

You further told Ms. Araki that correspondence had been sent out when that was not true. You provided Ms. Araki with copies of letters: one dated June 6, 1994, addressed to District Judge Anne Kass and another letter dated June 8, 1994, addressed to opposing counsel. There is no record showing that either letter was delivered.

Also, Ms. Araki alleged that you failed to keep her informed about her case. You failed to inform Ms. Araki of a Temporary Domestic Order when it was issued by the court on January 18, 1994. You did not provide her with a copy of the order until July 1, 1994. Finally, despite Ms. Araki's numerous requests for an itemized statement detailing the services performed and fees incurred in the course of the representation, you failed to provide any statement of services rendered.

The *Amended Specification of Charges* also contained allegations regarding your representation of Margaret Michel who retained you to represent her in a custody matter and in a personal injury case. In the course of the representation, you changed office addresses and did not advise Ms. Michel of your change of address or telephone number. Ms. Michel ultimately retained new counsel to represent her. Ms. Michel and her new attorney attempted to contact you to obtain the case file. On November 27, 1995, you advised Ms. Michel's new attorney that the file had

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been mailed to her on November 1, 1995. As of December 1, 1995, the date Ms. Michel submitted her complaint to the Disciplinary Board, the file still had not been delivered.

You finally forwarded the Michel personal injury file to Ms. Michel's new attorney by way of facsimile on December 15, 1995. Contained in the documents received by Ms. Michel's new attorney was a copy of a letter dated November 21, 1995, stating that on that date you mailed the Michel file to Ms. Michel's new attorney. There is no record that the correspondence, date November 21, 1995, was ever received by subsequent counsel.

Within the Michel file submitted by facsimile on December 15, 1995, was a copy of a letter dated June 21, 1995, wherein you requested that Ms. Michel sign a Contingency Fee Agreement and a Medical Authorization in order to allow you to represent her in her personal injury case. Ms. Michel never received the letter dated June 21, 1995.

Pursuant to the consent agreement you agreed not to contest allegations that you violated Rules 16-101 (by failing to provide competent representation to your client); 16-103 (by failing to provide diligent representation to your client); 16-104(A) (by failing to keep your client reasonably informed regarding the status of the matter, and by failing to promptly reply to reasonable requests for information); 16-105(A) (by charging an unreasonable fee for the work performed for your client); 16-116(D) (by failing to terminate the representation in an orderly fashion, and also by failing to surrender papers and property to which the client

is entitled; 16-804(D) (by engaging in conduct that is prejudicial to the administration of justice); and 16-804(H) (by engaging in conduct that adversely reflects on your fitness to practice law).

Perhaps the most disturbing pattern of misconduct noted in the matters discussed above was your propensity for inaction. Clients have a right to expect prompt and competent representation. Your failure to act in a timely manner in these cases harms not only your clients, but the integrity of the legal profession.

The *Amended Specification of Charges* also contain allegations regarding your failure to cooperate with disciplinary counsel during the course of the disciplinary investigation. Although you responded to Ms. Araki's complaint, you ignored requests for additional information. You never responded to the Michel complaint in part because correspondence mailed to your address of record was returned undelivered after you changed your address. You provided no forwarding address. Nor did you notify either the Supreme Court Clerk's office or the office of disciplinary counsel as to your current law office address.

Pursuant to the consent agreement, you also agreed not to contest allegations that you violated the following Rules of Professional Conduct by your failure to cooperate with the disciplinary process:

- Rule 16-801(B) by failing to respond to lawful requests for information from the office of disciplinary counsel;
- Rule 16-803(D) by failing to cooperate with the Disciplinary Board;

- Rule 16-804(D) by engaging in conduct that is prejudicial to the administration of justice;
- Rule 16-804(H) by engaging in conduct that adversely reflects on your fitness to practice law; and
- Rule 17-202(A) by failing to file a supplemental statement notifying State Bar and the Supreme Court of New Mexico of your current office address.

As you have now been working with a supervising attorney for a period of one year, it is hoped that you are now fully aware of your obligations not only to your clients but also to opposing counsel, the office of disciplinary counsel, and the judicial system as a whole. An attorney is a professional who is expected to maintain quality communication with all persons involved in the judicial process. You must insure that you maintain a current address of record and more importantly, that you maintain consistent communication with your clients. It is hoped that, by way of this Formal Reprimand and the supervision you received during your probation, you have properly addressed the shortcomings of your practice and that in the future, you will avoid a duplication of the violations of the Rules of Professional Conduct which brought you before this Board.

This Formal Reprimand will be filed with the Supreme Court in accordance with Rule 17-206(D), NMRA 1998, and will remain as part of your permanent record with the Disciplinary Board, where it may be revealed upon any inquiry to the Board concerning discipline imposed against you. In addition, in accordance with Rule 17-206(D), NMRA 1998, the entire text of this Formal Reprimand will be published in the State Bar of New Mexico *Bar Bulletin*.

### Proposed New Forms for Use in Filing Domestic Violence Cases

The Supreme Court is considering proposed new forms for use in domestic  
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## Professionalism Tips from the State Bar

**With respect to the public and to our system of justice:**

*I will be mindful of my obligation, as a member of a self-regulating profession, to be an active participant, when appropriate, in the disciplinary process.*

A LAWYER'S CREED OF PROFESSIONALISM